

BETSEY Y. WEBBER.

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APRIL 6, 1896.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

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Mr. SULLOWAY, from the Committee on Invalid Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany S. 178.]

The Committee on Invalid Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (S. 178) granting a pension to Betsey Y. Webber, having carefully considered the same, adopt the accompanying Senate report (No. 133) as their own, and respectfully recommend the passage of the bill with the following amendment:

In line 6, before the word "mother," insert the word "dependent."

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[Senate Report No. 133, Fifty-fourth Congress, first session.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (S. 178) granting a pension to Betsey Y. Webber, have examined the same and report:

Claimant is the dependent mother of Otis Webber, late private of Company K, Twenty-ninth Maine Volunteer Infantry. Soldier served from September 12, 1863, to August 22, 1865. There is much evidence on file to show that he received a sunstroke while in the line of duty, and it is conclusively shown that he exhibited aberrations of mind continually from the date of his return home to the time of his death, which occurred May 9, 1894, from drowning (suicide). It is also made to appear, by numerous affidavits, that soldier, during his service and whenever able to work after his discharge, contributed his earnings toward the support of his father and mother, who were in destitute circumstances.

A numerous signed petition, addressed to Hon. William P. Frye, sets forth that the parents are aged, sick, and infirm, and that they are subjects of public charity.

The mother filed a claim for pension under the act of June 27, 1890, which was rejected on the ground that soldier's death by drowning was not due to his military service, and hence that claimant had no pensionable status.

It is true that the act of June 27, 1890, does require that dependent parents shall show that death came to the soldier as a result of army service, and hence the decision of the Pension Bureau was correct, under a strict interpretation of the law. But it should be borne in mind that the soldier's mental condition, which induced him to commit suicide, was probably the result of sunstroke in the service, although that can not be absolutely proved.

In considering the equities of the case your committee accept that as a probable fact, and, in connection with the further fact that the mother is sick and destitute, recommend favorable action on the bill.